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RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI 4333
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI 0939
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE 6652
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR 5538
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ISLAMABAD 000180

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [EAID](#) [MARR](#) [PK](#)

SUBJECT: ANOTHER CABINET EXPANSION; MQM JOINS GOVERNMENT

REF: 08 ISLAMABAD 3491

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

11. (C) Summary: President Asif Zardari swore in four more federal ministers on January 26, two from the religious Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party (JUI-F, including Fazlur Rehman's brother) and two from the Karachi-based Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM). With this move, Zardari formally brings MQM and its 25 National Assembly votes into the coalition. JUI-F expected to receive only one additional ministry; the Awami National Party (ANP) expected to receive a ministry it did not get. Zardari has been unhappy with ANP's inability in the Northwest Frontier Province to deal with a spreading insurgency, and there are reports that Zardari recently asked Fazlur Rehman to step in. It appears that Fazlur's price was an additional seat in the cabinet. End summary.

And Then There Were 62

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12. (SBU) On January 26, President Asif Zardari inducted four new federal ministers, expanding the executive to 62 ministers, with 18 state ministers (like deputy secretaries) and three advisors (non-parliamentarians given cabinet rank).

Coalition partner Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam (JUI-F) gained two more ministries, National Assembly Member (MNA) Maulana Attaur Rehman as Tourism Minister and Senator Azam Swati as Science and Technology Minister. JUI-F now controls three ministries. The Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM), already aligned with the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) in Sindh province, officially joins the ruling coalition in Islamabad with MNA Dr. Farooq Sattar becoming Overseas Pakistanis Minister and Senator Babar Ghauri becoming Ports and Shipping Minister.

13. (SBU) The following provides quick biographic notes on the new ministers.

-- Tourism Minister Maulana Attaur Rehman (JUI-F) is brother of JUI-F chief Maulana Fazlur Rehman. Attaur was elected to the National Assembly from D.I. Khan (Tank), Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP), in 2002 and again in 2008.

-- Science and Technology Minister Azam Swati (JUI-F) is a Senator from NWFP (Mansehra). After losing a National Assembly race in 2002, Swati was elected to the Senate in 12006. He was a naturalized U.S. citizen, living in Texas a number of years. Reportedly, he still has considerable investments in gas stations throughout Texas and Louisiana. Swati claims to have relinquished his U.S. citizenship in

order to run for office in Pakistan.

-- Overseas Pakistanis Minister Dr. Farooq Sattar (MQM) serves as the MQM's Deputy Convenor, the highest ranking party member inside Pakistan. (Note: MQM Convenor Altaf Hussain lives in self-imposed exile in London.) Sattar was elected to the National Assembly from Karachi, Sindh, in 2002 and again in 2008. During his first term, he served as Foreign Affairs Committee Chair.

-- Ports and Shipping Minister Babar Ghauri (MQM) is a Senator from Sindh (Karachi). He held this same portfolio 2004-2007 under the Musharraf administration. Ghauri is up for re-election in March, but is expected to be returned to the Senate.

¶4. (C) Comment: With this expansion of an already historically large cabinet, Zardari has given away the bare minimum to secure his political right and left flanks. The religiously conservative JUI-F remains in the ruling coalition, providing the secular PPP some cover for unpopular military actions in the tribal areas. Meanwhile, Karachi's MQM finally received a stake in the federal government. The MQM's 25 votes gives PM Gilani's government a parliamentary majority it has lacked since Nawaz Sharif withdrew from the coalition. Zardari may be poised to add to his hold on government with the addition of the Pakistan Muslim League's (PML) 54 parliamentary votes, but this will depend on the pending political battle over control of the Punjab. End comment.

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